

DTV Delay Bill Fails in House, Rep. Hall Pushes for Another Vote Due to Problems at FCC Washington, DC – With an estimated 6.5 million U.S. households unprepared for the scheduled February 17 switch to all-digital television (DTV), U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) voted to give consumers still using analog signals more time to keep from going dark. Unfortunately, the legislation Hall voted for that would extend the DTV switch to June 12 failed to pass the House of Representatives. The bill passed the Senate unanimously earlier this week and Congressman Hall is urging House leadership to bring the bill up again next week.

Today's DTV bill was brought up in the House under a suspension of the rules, meaning it needed approval by a two-thirds majority. The bill failed by 258 to 168, even though a majority voted for passage. Therefore, Hall is asking for the legislation to be brought up next week under regular order, meaning it would only need a simple majority.

"The implementation of the DTV switch has been flubbed from the start," said Congressman Hall. "Especially during these difficult economic times, consumers shouldn't be forced to purchase new equipment to receive a TV signal because the government didn't have its act together."

Individuals with analog-only televisions were able to apply for up to two \$40 coupons distributed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to subsidize the cost of purchasing a digital converter box. However, the current coupons expired within 90 days, and after expiration residents are unable to apply for new ones, leaving many without this much-needed fiscal support to secure the converter boxes. This month the Commerce Department hit a \$1.34 billion funding limit for \$40 coupons that help consumers pay for digital TV converter boxes, which cost between \$50 and \$80. Consumers who need coupons are now being placed on a waiting list until already-issued coupons reach their 90-day expiration date, making money available for additional coupons. About 3 million consumers are on the waiting list.

\$650 million to help with the conversion was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 1) which passed the House today with Hall's support.

"\$650 million for the DTV switch in the economic stimulus bill will help provide coupons for those on the wait list," said Hall. "But consumers still need more time."

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